

**Statement of Hon. Mignon L. Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission
On the Passing of Nelson Mandela**

Like so many millions around the world, I have been braced for news of the passing of President Nelson Mandela for some months now. Unlike many others though, I have purposely tuned out the media coverage of the life and legacy of this giant of a man.

Instead, I have opted to quietly reflect on what Mandela means to me — in the deepest, most spiritual way — as an African American, as a woman, as a Southerner and as a legatee of our nation's own liberation.

I vividly remember my own disbelief as I read my "Weekly Reader" decades ago about a system called apartheid. I remember asking my parents and my teacher if the words and horrific images were from some long-ago history book. I remember contrasting those images with my own reality, where the state of oppression had been largely conquered by caring and committed people like my parents who struggled to make South Carolina — and the rest of this nation — better. Apartheid could not be real in the 1970s, because that inhumane treatment ended years ago.

But I was wrong—incredibly wrong. Apartheid was real and alive in South Africa...

I cannot convey in words what this man's life will forever mean to me — how my first and only personal letter to the editor in the late 1980s was in defense of some of the friendships and alliances Mandela forged during his struggle for freedom and justice. I cannot adequately explain how the deepest level of anguish and distress I have ever felt for another overcame me as I visited "his prison home" on Robben Island. And I cannot do justice to the indelible impact Mandela had on one young soul looking at the world from the heart of South Carolina.

Instead, today I will hold on and hold dear to the lessons I learned from how he transformed himself, his nation and the world, and I will cherish the memory, the legacy and the life of a man whose assignment was complete.

We have lost not only a lion of Africa, but a hero of humanity, in Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. His life and service to all mankind has truly made this world a better place.